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MODERN DAY OPERA AND THE OPERA GOPLANA

Annotation

This article presents the application of modern technologies in the field of opera. Every form of art reflects society - its development, views, and progress. Man has used and uses as a means of expression all the available materials of a given time to express himself. Twenty-first century is the age of new technologies, they are part of our everyday life and they do not stop developing. They have become a language that artists use more and more naturally and their presence in art is no longer a surprise and futurism. The article presents an example with the Tetr Wielki Gplana of the Polish composer Vladislav Zhelenski.

Key words: *opera, art, modern technologies, Tetr Wielki Gplana, composer Vladislav Zhelenski.*

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СОВРЕМЕННЫЙ ДЕНЬ ОПЕРЫ И ОПЕРЫ ГОПЛАНА

Аннотация

В данной статье представлено применение современных технологий в области оперы. Каждая форма искусства отражает общество – его развитие, взгляды и прогресс. Человек использовал и использует в качестве средства выражения все доступные материалы определенного времени, чтобы выразить себя. Двадцать первый век – это век новых технологий, они являются частью нашей повседневной жизни и не перестают развиваться. Они стали языком, который художники используют все более и более естественно, и их присутствие в искусстве больше не является сюрпризом и футуризмом. В статье представлен пример с Театром Вельки Гопланой польского композитора Владислава Желеньского.

Ключевые слова: *опера, искусство, современные технологии, Театр Вельки Гоплана, Владислав Желеньский.*

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ГОПЛАНА ОПЕРАСЫ ЖӘНЕ ЗАМАНАУИ ОПЕРАНЫҢ ҚАЗІРГІ КҮНІ

Аннотация

Бұл мақалада опера саласында заманауи технологияларды қолдану туралы ақпарат ұсынылған. Өнердің әрбір түрі қоғамды – оның дамуын, көзқарасын және прогресін бейнелейді. Адам өзін «таныту, көрсету» үшін белгілі бір уақыттың барлық қолжетімді материалдарын пайдаланады. Жиырма бірінші ғасыр – бұл жаңа технологиялар ғасыры, олар біздің күнделікті өміріміздің бір бөлігі болып табылады және технологиялар дамуы тоқтатылмайды. Олар суретшілер қауымы күн өткен сайын табиғи түрде көп қолданатын тілге айналуға, оларды өнерде қолдану бүгінгі таңда тосынсый және футуризм болудан қалып барады. Мақалада поляк композиторы Владислав Желеньскийдің Велька Гоплана театры мысал ретінде келтірілген.

Түйінді сөздер: опера, өнер, заманауи технологиялар, Вельки Гоплана театры, Владислав Желенский.

At the International Scientific Conference in 2017 in Plovdiv, “Science, Education and Innovation in Arts” Professor Toni Shekerdzieva-Novak accentuates that art: “consists of practical knowledge but also of individual abilities which, despite the same theoretical preparation of the artist, give different results, depending on his personal talent and inclination. Creativity, in turn, is a combination of intelligence and imagination, properties that allow a creator to leave his trail and direction of movement. The perfection of each artist, through constant practice, helps to realize the custom commonly sought after artwork” [1].

Opportunities for upgrading the skills of professionals are opened on a project basis. Vassil Kolev, in his report «Project Principles of Funding and Management of Projects in the Field of Art – Past and Present” gives an example with sub-program “MEDIA”, which provides support for a variety of activities related to both the creation of audiovisual works and the acquisition and the development of skills and competences by audiovisual experts, knowledge sharing and networking [2].

In article „The Live Skills” project – possibility for improving digital and management skills in the professions of subjects of audiovisual sector (AV) and live performance (LP)” Vesela Kazashka present: „People working in this area of AV and LP need constant flexibility and ability to adapt to the use of new technologies and professional software. The 21st century skills are a set of abilities that professionals need to develop to succeed in the information age. The new skills needed are: flexibility,

initiative, social skills, productivity, leadership, critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration and communication” [3].

Opera Theatre, although it has retained its main features for its 400 years of existence, is constantly evolving. Nowadays, it often provokes us with original stage productions, scenography, choreography, and uses new technologies in its performances.

An example of this is the performance of *Goplana* by Tetr Wielki by the Polish composer Władysław Żeleński, which received an Award for a rediscovered work at the International Opera Awards in 2017 [4-6].

The life and creative work of Władysław Żeleński are the subject of my research as a PhD student at the Academy of Music, Dance and Fine Arts in Plovdiv. He was a composer, pianist, organist, orchestra conductor, lecturer, music critic, and active public figure during the second half of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century. He is best known for his vocal lyrics and his four operas, but his work also includes symphonic and chamber music. Here, we mainly find features of Polish life, folklore and literature. The libretto of operas and the texts of his vocal creations he borrowed from the work of Polish poets and writers, thus helping to preserve national self-consciousness in the hard times during which Poland was under the rule of its neighbours. His work *Goplana* is a romantic opera with libretto by Lubomil German, based on stories from the fairy-tale fantastic tragedy “*Balladina*” by Juliusz Slowacki. It is the second opera of the composer, completed in 1894. The premiere of *Goplana* was on 23rd June 1896 in Krakow. Staged at the Lviv Opera Theatre. In 1949 in Warsaw was the final performance of *Goplana* before its resumption by Teatr Wielki on 5.11.2016. Before receiving the international award in 2017, it was a great success in front of the native audience.

Two plot lines intertwine in the opera’s act. One of the water nymph named *Goplana* and the other of *Balladina*, one of the two daughters of a poor widow. The nymph and her water spirits with the help of their magical powers introduce prince *Kirkor* into *Balladina*’s life in order to separate her more easily from her beloved - the young *Grabets* whom they want to lure to themselves. They use the typical human features like greed and desire for power that gives effect. The village girl, fascinated by the thought of becoming the prince’s wife, defends this opportunity by killing her sister *Alina*, who is in love with him, and tells her mother that she saw her run away with another. *Balladina* marries the prince, but the terrible sin leads others. The mother says she sees *Alina* in her dreams as a crime victim, and she casts her out of the palace. The former beloved of *Balladina*, *Grebets*, the only and involuntary witness to the murder, is poisoned when he reveals to her what he has seen. Finally, *Balladina* is exposed in front of everyone for her acts and is stricken by a thunder.

Since 2012, the International Opera Awards, held in London, have gained increasing popularity. They annually show, celebrate and reward high performances in opera art around the world, generate financial funds for scholarships of promising young talents, and thus help further the development of this type of art. Awards are given in over 20 categories, and everyone of the general public can vote for their favourites over the Internet.

Since 2013, the “Rediscovered Work of the Year” category has been featured in these awards. In 2017 this category, as we have already mentioned, was won by the Polish composer’s three-act opera *Goplana*. Among the finalists nominated in this category are also the names of composers Gaetano Donizetti, Umberto Giordano, Antonio Cesti, Oscar Strauss, and Alfredo Casella. The opera theatres, performing their works, are known for their traditions in demanding high quality in their productions, including La Scala, Torino’s Royal Opera House, Komische Oper Berlin. Awarding of the production of *Theatr Wielki* among these names shows undoubtedly that the team of professionals and musicians gathered for it managed to achieve its goals and create a competitive performance. Behind the conductor’s board is Grzegorz Nowak - the first orchestra conductor of the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of London since 2014. The soloists include Polish artists such as Arnold Rutkowski, Mariusz Godlewski, Malgorzata Walewska, Violeta Hodowicz and others. Director, stage designer and costume designer is Janusz Vishnevsky - winner of a number of awards from international theatre festivals in France, Germany, Ireland, Bulgaria, and others. Choreography and stage moves are entrusted to Bartosz Zysk, a ballet-dancer at *Teatr Wielki* since 2007, a winner of a number of awards, including the first prize at the National Ballet Competition in Gdansk 2007. He has been involved with choreography since 2016 and in his first steps he has reached the finals of two serious choreography competitions - 31st International Competition in Hanover, 2016 and the 10th International Choreography Competition in Copenhagen, 2017. For both competitions, he created individual choreographies in less than a year.

In the production of *Goplana*, the director Janusz Vishnevsky deals not only with directing, but also with scenography and costume design, which more often are performed by individual professionals, and on which the overall appearance of the performance depends. Scenography is contemporary and filled with many signs and messages, each detail being considered and interrelated with others. One of the main ideas provoking the spectators is the use in the mass choral scenes of artistic images of different styles and epochs of fine arts, among which the *Los Caprichos* of Francisco Goya from the late 19th century, *American Gothic* of Grant Wood 1930, *The Yellow Christ* of Paul Gauguin, etc. They seem to be the living incarnation of human supremacy, culture, values, and morality,

watching how their lack is the root cause of the dramaturgical development of the action.

In 1893 with the ballet music of the third act, Żeleński won first place at the composer's contest in the name of Uzeph Kurierov. We can assume that in the previous productions of 19th and 20th century in its background classic ballet choreographies were performed. This is how dance breaks had taken place in the dramaturgical action that were modern in their time. In the last performance of Teatr Wielki, classical choreography on ballet music was not used. The director decides to focus on artistic images, thus emphasizing the importance of their role. They perform an original, varied and easily danced choreography, which testifies to the choreographer's quickness of mind and ability to select appropriate movements for both their abilities and to help for the implementation of the director's ideas. According to Aletta Collins, a choreographer at London's Royal Opera House, the aim of such choreographies is to have the whole ensemble move as a whole [7]. Bartosz Zysk achieves this, not only during ballet music but also during the rest of the play. The integrity of the chorus impresses with its appearance before the introduction sounds. Everybody moves tightly together and with small steps, a technique whereby even without synchronicity the effect of unity is obtained. Speaking in a loud voice simultaneously also contributes to this effect in separate parts of the action. The classical ballet choreography is not overlooked and takes its place in the performance. The ballerina, dressed in white and with white make-up, recreates the spirit of the murdered Alina at the moments when her image appears in the text of her mother's and her sister's vocal parts.



Pic.1. Photo from the staging of *Goplana Act 3, Scene VI*

New technologies, as we have already mentioned, are increasingly a natural component in the performance of opera theatres in the 21st century

[8-10]. Thus, opera productions become more innovative, accessible and understandable to the general public. The producer of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company in London, Sara Ellis, who is also the Director of Digital Development, after Shakespeare's play *The Storm* says: "Audiences that came in through the Shakespeare walked away with the technology, and audiences that came in through the technology walked away with the Shakespeare" [10].

Some of the technological scenography solutions used in the opera *Goplana* are a mechanized boat powered by a remote control and "floating" on a smoke-filled stage, as well as robotized mutes with light bulbs used for heads - another artistic image recreated technologically inspired by the work of René Magritte, and in particular his painting – *Portrait of Edward James*. The set of different technologies fits naturally into the play and contributes to its clarity, complexity and achievement of stage diversity.

The increasingly popular video design is also part of the production. Specially designed animated videos of flying fairy-tale creatures are projected at different moments of the action, enhancing it and giving it fairy-tale impression and fantasy. It is a fact that the use of projections, slides and films has begun at the beginning of the 20th century in theatrical productions of great directors such as Brecht, Meyerhold, Piscator and others. The difference between then and now is in the technology and style of presentation that undergoes change, naturally related to the technological capabilities of the time in which it arises.

For opera scenography, video design is a relatively new introduction that is becoming ever more universal. Its frequent appearance among scenographic solutions in recent years is perfectly logical in view of the turbulent technological time we live in and the desire of people to keep pace with new technologies. This introduction modernizes the theatrical production of *Teatr Wielki* and naturally combines with the simple, almost deprived scenery. An interesting fact is that in 2007 the Association of American Artists officially added the specialty of video designer to the list of job-positions that could benefit from its protection.

The introduction of streaming technology, which allows direct online broadcasts, is also part of today's opportunities to promote opera art. For several years, the major opera theatres have enabled the general public around the world to watch their live performances on certain channels, websites and internet platforms or in cinemas. All this allows opera art to reach a wider audience and win new admirers. The result of the efforts made by *Teatr Wielki*'s team to create a modern and original performance of *Goplana* is also widely available through streaming technology. The premiere is broadcasted live and free on the high-resolution website of *Teatr Wielki* and is viewed by people all over the world.

We can say that the production of Teatr Wielki is one of the many examples in which Opera Theatre has managed to meet the challenge of developing and being creative and interesting in the turbulent technological times of the 21st century. The view that the opera is an elite art that is intended for a limited group of selected visitors and lovers is increasingly losing its ground thanks to modern productions, choreography, scenography, and the use of modern technological means. The rediscovery of Żeleński's opera *Goplana* is supported by both world-class professionalism and interesting contemporary solutions combined in such a way that it is not accidental that it was nominated and awarded a prestigious award.

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